

Address
of
Hon. Legh R. Watts
of Portsmouth, Virginia

**Before the Sidney Lanier Chapter
of the Daughters of the Confederacy
at Macon, Ga., January 19th 1908
Lee's Birthday**

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*Before the Sidney Lanier Chapter of the Daughters of
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Mr. Chairman:

I thank you, Colonel Harris, for your eloquent but all too complimentary words of introduction, and tender grateful acknowledgments to you, ladies of Sydney Lanier Chapter, United Daughters of the Confederacy; to you, veterans of R. A. Smith Camp and Macon Camp; to you, young ladies of Wesleyan Female College; to you, citizen-soldiers; and to you, ladies and gentlemen, for this cordial reception and most generous welcome. While most gratifying to me personally, I can but regard it as an evidence of the sincere attachment and kinship which unites in the closest bonds of sisterhood, the Empire State of the South and the Old Dominion—it is Georgia's greeting to Virginia, and speaking for Virginia, again I thank you.

A great man has been defined as, "One who chooses the right with the most invincible resolution; who resists the sorest temptations from within and without; who bears the heaviest burdens cheerfully; who is calmest in storms and most fearless under menace and frowns; whose reliance on truth, on virtue, on God, is most unfaltering."

In all periods and in all countries, the observance of certain days has been decreed by the church or the State in commemoration of some epoch-making event in its history, or as the birthday of one who wrought mightily and achieved great and beneficial results for the cause he represented or the times in which he lived.

December 25th is celebrated throughout the Christian world, not only by those who profess and call themselves Christians, but by the people everywhere, as the anniversary of that ever blessed

morning, when the Angel of the Lord, surrounded by a multitude of the Heavenly Hosts, all praising God, said to the watching and wondering shepherds, tending their flocks in the fields of Bethlehem: "Fear not; for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."

July 4th is observed in the United States, and by its citizens in other lands, as the birthday of the Republic. The Continental Congress, on that day, 1776, renounced all allegiance to the British crown, and solemnly declared the United Colonies free and independent States. By that declaration, one of the most important and far reaching in all history, the thirteen colonies, before dependent upon England, were transformed into thirteen republics, or, as Mr. Calhoun expressed it, "The Declaration of Independence changed the provinces, subject to Great Britain, to States, subject to nobody."

After the war for independence, these thirteen sovereigns united in forming a Federal Union, and adopted a constitution, under which "all powers not delegated to the United States, nor prohibited to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people."

Under this constitution and the several amendments thereto, there is no loss of separate and independent autonomy to the States, "for the preservation of the States and the maintenance of their government is as much within the design and care of the constitution as the preservation of the Union and maintenance of the National Government."

Today, January 19th, is, by the statute of Georgia, and the law of many of her sister States of the South, a general holiday. One year and a century ago was born at Stratford, in the County of Westmoreland, in the State of Virginia, Robert Edward Lee: seventy-five years before, February 22d (N. S.) 1732, at Pope's Creek, in the same county, and only a few miles distant, was born George Washington; thus, within a century, the little County of Westmoreland, in the northern neck of Virginia, with an area of only 170 square miles, gave to Virginia and the world, the two foremost men of all the ages.

It is well to note—and a curious coincidence—how the lives of these two illustrious men ran parallel.

Washington resigned his commission in the British Army in

1754, yet the year following, he served as aid on the staff of General Braddock, and saved, by his valor and judgment, the remnants of the English Army, after its disastrous defeat on the banks of the Monongehela. Lee held a commission in the United States Army, and won fame and promotion in the war with Mexico.

When the American colonies determined to resist the enforcement of the unjust legislation of the British Parliament, Washington was among the first to tender his services and was made Commander-in-Chief of the armies raised for their defense. When, in 1861, Virginia determined to resist the invasion of her sister States of the South and withdrew from the Federal Union, Lee resigned his commission in the army and was at once made Commander-in-Chief, of the Virginia forces.

Washington led the infant colonies to victory and achieved the independence of his country; Lee, "worn out by his own victories," was at last "forced to yield to overwhelming numbers and resources." Washington, the victor, was "first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen." Lee, the vanquished, was the idol of his army and is today one of the best beloved of Americans.

Washington, during the Revolution, and after its close, was denounced as a rebel—he now commands and receives the respectful homage of all true Englishmen. Lee, during and immediately after the Civil War, was called a traitor, but his every action has been vindicated and his former enemies of the North unite with the people of the South in doing honor to his memory.

In fact, Washington and Lee are inseparably associated in our country's history:—

"I tell you Lee shall ride
With that great 'rebel' down the years,
Twin rebels, side by side.

* * * * *

These two shall ride immortal,
And shall ride abreast of Time,
Shall light up stately history,
And blaze in epic rhyme.
Both patriots, both Virginians true,
Both rebels, both sublime."

I come today in response to your generous invitation to unite in these memorial services and perform as best I may the part assigned, realizing most fully and regretting most sincerely, my inability to meet either your just expectations or the requirements of the occasion.

I come not to eulogize the "Great Virginian"—Robert Edward Lee has passed above and beyond human encomium—he is safely and forever with the immortals; as was said by Alexander Hamilton of George Washington, so it may be said of R. E. Lee, "The voice of praise would in vain endeavor to exalt a name unrivalled in true glory."

In the past, many tributes have been paid his memory, but I recall none more eloquent or more ^{invaluable} truthful than that of Senator Hill, in his address to the Southern Historical Society, at Atlanta, February 18th, 1874. To this nothing need be added—from it, nothing can be truthfully taken away—it will live in our language as a classic.

Pardon a digression. I would fail to respond to the promptings of my own heart, if, here, in the State he served so faithfully and ably, in this presence, surrounded by the people whom he loved and who so loved him, I omitted to pay a Virginian's tribute to the memory of the greatest Southern statesman of the reconstruction period—Benjamin Harvey Hill, the close friend and associate of Davis and Lee.

In all these years, perhaps the most momentous in the history of the South, he stood the boldest, the bravest and the ablest of her defenders.

Recall with me, the day in January, 1876, the beginning of the centennial year, when James G. Blaine, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and an aspirant for the Presidency, in order to secure a personal and political advantage, appealed to the lowest passions and prejudices of his section, in a cruel attack upon the character and humanity of the venerable and venerated ex-President of the Confederate States and the men and women who followed him through those weary years of suffering, sacrifice and starvation. It was Hill's to reply, and his answer was worthy alike the cause he championed, the man and the people for whom he spoke, and the best traditions of the American Congress. Towering like Agamemnon, king of men, above his fellows, his eye flashing with righteous indignation, with an eloquence

never perhaps surpassed and an array of facts unanswerable, he not only refuted every charge, but utterly crushed, with the overwhelming power of eternal truth, the so-called "Plumed Knight," and won for himself an immortality of fame. He spoke for peace and reconciliation—that brothers of a common family, "at home in the father's house," should love one another.

I recall another scene, when Hill, in the Senate of the United States, speaking from the mountain ranges of purer politics and higher statesmanship, declared: "Fidelity to trust is the highest public duty," and sought to recall a recreant Senator to his duty.

The tribute paid this great man's memory by President Davis was well deserved. He said: "In victory or defeat, he was ever the same—brave, courageous, true. He was Hill the faithful."

Nor do I come to speak of Robert E. Lee's character as a man, or his achievements as a soldier; these, for half a century, have been considered and discussed by the ablest critics, civil and military, in this country and in Europe, by friends and former foes, and a conclusion reached with singular unanimity; from no quarter—North or South—at home or abroad—comes a discordant note. Mr. James Ford Rhodes, a Northern writer, in his admirable and impartial history of the United States, referring to the reasons inducing Lee's resignation from the Federal Army, writes:

"Lee, now ~~fifty~~ four years old, his face exhibiting the ruddy glow of health and his head without a gray hair, was physically and morally a splendid example of manhood. Able to trace his lineage far back in the mother country, the best blood of Virginia flowed in his veins. The founder of the Virginia family, who emigrated in the time of Charles I., was a cavalier in sentiment; 'Light Horse Harry' of the Revolution, was the father of Robert E. Lee. Drawing from a knightly race all their virtues, he had inherited none of their vices. Honest, sincere, simple, magnanimous, forbearing, refined, courteous, yet dignified and proud, never lacking self-command, he was in all respects a true man. Graduating from West Point, his life had been exclusively that of a soldier, yet he had none of the soldier's bad habits. He used neither liquor nor tobacco, indulged rarely in a social glass of wine, and cared nothing for the pleasures of the table.

"Northern men may regret that Lee did not see his duty in the same light as did two other Virginians, Scott and Thomas,

but censure's voice upon the action of such a noble soul is hushed. A careful survey of his character and life must lead the student of men and affairs to see that the course he took was, from his point of view and judged by his inexorable and pure conscience, the path of duty to which a high sense of honor called him.

"'Duty is the sublimest word in our language,' he wrote his son. Sincerely religious, Providence to him was a verity, and it may be truly said he walked with God."

Of Lee, the soldier, Theodore Roosevelt, President of the United States, in his life of Thomas H. Benton, written in 1886, says:

"The world has never seen better soldiers than those who followed Lee; and their leader will undoubtedly rank, without any exception, as the very greatest of all the great captains that the English speaking people have brought forth, and this, although the last and chief of his antagonists, may himself claim to stand as the full equal of Marlborough and Wellington."

These opinions, both from Northern writers, clearly indicate the position the "Great Virginian" occupies and will ever occupy in history.

I have given a definition of a "great man." It is perhaps the most exacting to be found in the books; it is my purpose to show, by reference to a few of many incidents in the career of General Lee, how he measures up to the highest standard and meets its every requirement.

RESIGNATION FROM THE ARMY.

First.—He chose the right with the most invincible resolution and resisted the sorest temptation from within and without.

In the early spring of 1861, Colonel Robert E. Lee was called from Texas and assigned to duty in the city of Washington. Soon after his arrival, the storm, so long gathering, broke upon the country, and he was forced to choose between the Union and his Mother State—the alternative was most painful. Lee was not a secessionist, and while he recognized the right and duty to resist oppression, he did not think the then existing conditions justified a dissolution of the Union. He was a Union man from conviction, but he was a Virginian.

Let us, for a moment, consider the moral conflict and the varied emotions which must, at this supreme moment, have agi-

tated the mind of Colonel Lee. He had returned to Arlington, the home dear to him, around which clustered so many sacred memories; standing on its pillared verandah and looking across the Potomac, he saw, on one side the capitol of his country, with the flag for which he had fought and under which he had gained imperishable fame, floating from its dome; on the other side were the fertile fields of Virginia, his Mother State, who had voted him a sword in recognition of distinguished services in the war with Mexico.

General Lee was opposed to secession and loved the Union; he also realized, as few men did, that a terrible war would inevitably follow the withdrawal of Virginia and the border States from the Union; besides, he never believed in the ultimate success of the South, should such a war be inaugurated. To add to the embarrassment of the situation, President Lincoln tendered him, through Mr. Blair, command of the Federal Army; he was to be made the successor of General Winfield Scott—the most tempting offer ever made to a soldier. What should he do? Ought he to decline the command tendered him and turn his back upon the flag and sever his association with General Scott, to whom he was so greatly attached? Ought he to lead an army of invasion to devastate the fields of Virginia and crimson her rivers with the blood of her best and bravest? Was he to draw the sword his mother gave against that mother's breast? This could not be,—the voice of duty was to him the voice of God; conscience was above preference, and yielding to its dictates, he resigned his commission in the Federal Army, said farewell to his beloved commander, turned his back upon Arlington and all its sacred relics and associations and tendered his services to Virginia, determined never again to draw his sword, save in her defense.

GETTYSBURG.

Second.—He bore the heaviest burdens cheerfully.

Perhaps the real magnanimity of General Lee's character was never more strikingly illustrated than by his action in assuming the responsibility for the disaster at Gettysburg.

After Chancellorsville, perhaps, from a military standpoint, the greatest of all his victories; the one which added immensely to his reputation as a soldier, Lee, while giving the glory to God,

with characteristic generosity, gave the credit to Jackson. So at Gettysburg, he said to the "sobbing" but heroic Pickett, when that general, who had led the world-famed charge, reported to him the destruction of his division: "Never mind, General, all this has been my fault; it is I who have lost this fight, and you must help me out of it the best way you can." And this, although he knew the repulse of Pickett's division and the defeat of the army, was wholly due to the failure of a trusted lieutenant to obey his orders.

Who may undertake to tell the feelings of General Lee, as from his position on the battle field he saw the men of Pickett's division, then performing a feat of heroism than which, quoting Charles Francis Adams, an eye-witness, "None in all recorded warfare was ever more persistent, more deadly, or more heroic"; defeated, forced to retire, practically annihilated, and this after General Armistead and his brave fellows had broken the Federal lines, gone over the breast-works of Cemetery Hill and planted the Confederate flag in triumph on the captured guns.

At this supreme moment who can doubt but that his thoughts turned to Jackson, and in the bitterness of his grief and disappointment he cried: "Oh, for one hour of Jackson now; oh, for one hour of that strong right arm that never failed to strike and never struck in vain; oh, for one hour of that steady loyalty that never questioned or hesitated, but always intelligently obeyed!

Lee said to Professor White, after the close of the war: "Had I had Stonewall Jackson at Gettysburg, I would have won a great victory."

Soon after the death of General Lee, a distinguished Englishman, in an address on the "Great Virginian," referred to Lee's action in this connection with such rare beauty and eloquence, that I quote in full:

"He honored the cause; he honored the sunburnt veterans orderly retreating; and he honored his own peerless humility when he bade them visit upon him the natural murmur and the sad fault. His soul was triumphant then. What a scene was that, my friends! What a moment in a life! What immortality for the painter who will bathe his brush in its inspiration and make it breathe on canvas! Such a spectacle was never seen before.

"The world has many battle-fields and history paints many

a hero, and nations hold in deserved veneration their names, their character and their exploits. Deeds of daring, consummate generalship, grand charges, wonderful endurance and a thousand noble eulogies enrich the historic page of all countries. But you will look in vain for so grand a climax in the character of any soldier, living or dead, as that to which I refer. Other generals, other leaders, had failed, but they sought cause in a thousand unforeseen contingencies. As though the brave needed an excuse for failure! But not so with Robert E. Lee. He towered like a monument and spake like an archangel when, before his brave, disheartened, defeated army, he raised himself erect in the saddle and with his hat in his hand, his gray locks seeming to grow suddenly white with the glory of his honest soul, and his eyes moistened from the deep fountains of his heart, said, 'It was my fault, my brave comrades; it was my fault'.

"The great of history are known frequently and are transmitted down the generations by something which they said, as indicative of what they were, on the eve of or after great events. The gallant Nelson bequeathed to a nation, which will never cease to honor his memory, the burning words which thrilled all hearts on the eve of Trafalgar: 'England expects every man to do his duty.' And then yielded up his life as his answer to his country's call to duty. The Iron Duke of Waterloo will forever be associated with the deep anxiety which wrung from his soul the peril of the hour, when he said, 'Would to God, Blucher or night were come.' And the Prussian cannon thundered him a joyous answer from the wavering left. Napoleon will be remembered for the words of despair that leaped from his heart in the last moments of a still thundering but lost battle, 'Do you tell me that my guards are turned? Then all is lost'; and, at that moment, greatness fled from the soul of this military Samson, and he became weak as other men. It was the confession of the failure of all his life. 'The Old Guard,' strewn dead upon the plain of Waterloo, carried with them the last hope that gilded the horizon of their great captain and his sun went down to rise no more, while it was yet day.

"But how different is the case of our great hero. I ask you, my countrymen, for a word to characterize his confession, voluntarily made to a defeated and retreating army, of which he was chief. There never was a moment when Cæsar could have made

it and lived. Much as the French Army loved the brave Napoleon, the time never occurred, when, on making such a confession, he could defy instant death.

"The nephew, Napoleon III., caused the defeat of his legions at Sedan, and fled to the victorious enemy for protection from his troops.

"Behold the hero who can lose a battle and confess himself the cause to his own soldiers. Aye, and they cheer him with voices choked with tears for his peerless magnanimity. It required greatness to make such a confession and nothing but transparent goodness would have dared so much. The tone, the words, the gesture, the sublime attitude—the whole man—was an inspiration.

"And if Gettysburg sealed the physical fate of the Confederacy, it established and proved, not only the valor of the common solidery, but the greatness of the captain, and of a cause which Providence deigned not to crown with success."

THE BATTLE OF SPOTTSYLVANIA.

Third.—He is calmest in storms and most fearless under menace and frowns.

On the morning of May 12th, 1864, the day of Spottsylvania, General Hancock, well called the "Superb," by a masterly movement, surprised the divisions of General Edward Johnson and George H. Stuart. These officers and most of their command, were made prisoners, the salient captured and the Army of Northern Virginia cut in twain. Lee's line was broken, his army divided, and through the breach the soldiers of Hancock were rushing with all the wild fury of a mountain stream. General Lee, sitting upon "Traveler," realized at once the crisis, and recognized that the fate of both the army and the cause hung in the uncertain balance of the almost lost battle. General John B. Gordon—your own loved Gordon—also saw and appreciated the danger, and while engaged in aligning his troops for a counter-charge, General Lee, spurring his horse, dashed to the front of his line, and standing, hat in hand, erect in his stirrups, looked first at the men, and then turning his horse's head to the front, was about to give the command, "Forward," when Gordon, forgetting for the moment the deference due his commander, said in a voice loud enough to be heard by his troops: "General Lee,

you shall not head my command—no man can do that ; I am here for that purpose. These men are Georgians and Virginians—they have never failed you, and they will not fail you now. General Lee, go back to the rear." The answer came from those sturdy veterans like the mighty roar of a cataract: "No, no, we will not fail you ; Lee to the rear." After forcing horse and rider back, General Gordon gave the command, "Charge!" and putting spurs to his horse, hat in hand, his sword flashing in the sunlight, he led those Georgians and Virginians, while they, with a wild enthusiasm, inspired with a conscious knowledge that the eyes of their beloved commander were upon them, moved forward with a fury that nothing but the power of the Lord God Omnipotent could have stayed or withstood. The lost ground was recovered, the broken line reformed, and ~~the~~ victory wrested from the very jaws of defeat. It was Gordon at Spottsylvania, with his Georgians and Virginians, who saved the Army of Northern Virginia from destruction and postponed, for a time, the final catastrophe. He did more, he saved the life then most precious in all the South, for had Lee fallen there was none to take his place.

APPOMATTOX—THE SURRENDER.

Fourth.—His reliance on truth, on virtue, on God, was most unfaltering.

In an hour of deep depression, General Lee said: "Human virtue should be equal to human calamity," and by his conduct and bearing at this time illustrated the truth of the statement.

At Appomattox he realized the end had come. There was nothing left but to accept the situation and surrender his army. It was suggested that the army disband, the men take to the mountains and carry on a guerilla warfare. To this he would not consent ; his reply was characteristic of the man. He said: "No, that will not do ; it must be remembered that we are Christian people ; we have fought this fight as well and as long as we know how—we have been defeated. For us as a Christian people there is but one course to pursue—we must accept the situation. These men must go home and plant a crop and we must proceed to build up our country on a new basis."

Only a short time before he had said to one of his staff: "I would rather die a thousand deaths than surrender this army."

When asked by a weeping officer, "Oh, General, what will history say of the surrender of this army in the field?" he at once replied: "That is not the question; the question is, Is it right? If it is right, I will take the responsibility."

How keenly he suffered is illustrated by a remark overhead immediately before his interview with General Grant: "I have only to ride along the line and all will be over, but it is our duty to live; for what will become of the women and children of the South, if we are not here to protect them?" His meeting with General Grant, the magnanimity of the victor and the calm self-poised dignity of the vanquished are a part of history. The whole object of General Grant, as was said by a Confederate officer present, "seemed to be to mitigate as far as lay in his power the bitterness of defeat"; while the demeanor of General Lee, as described by a Federal officer present, "was that of a thoroughly self-possessed gentleman, who had a very disagreeable duty to perform, but was determined to get through with it as well and as soon as he could." The negotiations ended, General Lee retired, the Federal officers present standing uncovered. Mounting his horse, he returned to his army, the Federal officers saluting and the Federal soldiers presenting arms, as he passed. This was the tribute of the American soldier to American valor. On reaching his lines he was cheered by his men, but when he told them of his surrender, and said, "Soldiers, we have fought through the war together—I have done the best for you I could," many of the veterans wept, and he, overcome by their grief, exclaimed, "I could wish I were numbered with the slain of the last battle," but recovering himself, added, "We must live for our afflicted country."

Here the military career of Robert E. Lee ended forever. He returned to his home in Richmond, shunning publicity, determined to devote his best efforts to bringing about a thorough and complete reconciliation between the sections. He believed that it was a part of wisdom for his people to acquiesce in the result of the war, and of candor to recognize the fact. He regarded the proper education of the youth of the South as a most important means to that end. At this time, he wrote: "I consider the proper education of the Southern youth as one of the most important objects to be attained, and the one from which the greatest benefit may be expected. Nothing will compensate

us for a depression of the standard of our morals and intellectual culture. Each State should take energetic measures to revive the schools and colleges." That he might aid in this great work, he declined all offers of positions and the large salaries attached thereto. He would not allow his name and influence to be used to aid, advertise or promote any business or enterprise. In declining an offer of position, which, from a pecuniary standpoint, was most tempting, he said: "I am grateful, but I have a self-imposed task which I must accomplish. I have led the young men of the South in battle; I have seen many of them die on the field; I shall devote my remaining energies in training young men to do their duty in life." In order more effectually to accomplish the great and beneficent work to which he had consecrated his remaining years, he accepted the Presidency of Washington College, at Lexington, Virginia, and there he taught both by precept and example, not only the youths, but the young men and veterans, and the mothers and daughters of the late Confederacy, the duties and obligations resting upon them.

In this labor of love he continued until the final summons. In the early morning of October 12th, 1870, the "Great Virginian" gave his last order,—“Let the tent be struck.” Then, his work done, the great mission of his life accomplished, he passed over the “river” and with Jackson, rested in the shade of the tree^s.

In addition to meeting all the requirements of “True Greatness,” as quoted, General Lee had that which Daniel Webster held to be the essential element of real greatness: “A solemn and religious regard for spiritual and eternal things.” General Lee was deeply and sincerely, but unostentatiously, pious; he was ^{the} a child of duty, and this was the true secret of his greatness. He had, in early life, achieved the greatest of all victories—the conquest of self—and ever afterwards subordinated every action and aspiration to the voice of conscience, which was to him the interpretation and the expression of the will of God. In peace and in war, from the beginning to the end, “everywhere and through all, he was never known to display an un-Christian passion or to let fall from his lips an ungenerous word.”

The cause for which General Lee fought is often referred to as “The Lost Cause.” This, I submit, is inaccurate. The cause

was not wholly lost; the great principles for which General Lee, and those following him, contended, were right, and—

“Eternal right, though all else fail,
Can never be made wrong.”

The Confederate cause, in so far as it contemplated and looked to the establishment of a separate and independent republic—“The Confederate States of America”—failed, but the great principles, the sovereignty and equality of the States and the right of local self-government, which were denied or threatened by the dominant party in 1861, were fully vindicated.

On the organization of the Federal Government, under the constitution, President Washington, in tendering Mr. John Jay the appointment of Chief Justice, referred to the judicial as a “Department which must be considered as the keystone of our political fabric,” and to the Associate Justices, he wrote, “The judicial system is the chief pillar upon which our national government must rest.”

Washington, Hamilton and their co-patriots, warmly favored conferring upon the Supreme Court jurisdiction in all cases of law and equity arising under the constitution of the United States. To this Mr. Jefferson was bitterly opposed. He said: “The judges are, in fact, the corps of sappers and miners, working underground to undermine the foundation of the Confederate fabric.”

The views of Washington prevailed. Had it been otherwise the Southern States and their people, at the close of the Civil War, would have been absolutely at the mercy of the vindictive and merciless majority in the Federal Congress.

Had Mr. Jefferson's views been adopted, the Supreme Court of the United States could not have considered or passed upon the constitutionality of the “Force Bill,” the “Civil Rights Bill,” and other kindred measures of wrong and oppression.

These acts would therefore have become the law of the land, with a result to the South and its people too horrible to contemplate. The theory of “State suicide,” urged by the radicals, would have prevailed, the autonomy of the Southern States would have been destroyed and the hell-inspired and devil-conducted orgies of the reconstruction period continued.

It was the Federal Courts that saved to the Southern States their government, and to the people of the South their property and their civilization.

The decision of the Supreme Court of the United States in all questions growing out of the Civil War and the the legislation of Congress in the matters of reconstruction, demonstrate the wisdom of Washington. This august tribunal has, indeed, been the "keystone of our political fabric," and "the chief pillar upon which the national government has rested." These decisions, from the protest of Chief Justice Taney, penned with almost dying hand in 1861, against the illegal suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, down to and including the recent decision in *Giles versus Harris*, sustaining the consstitution of Alabama, have been wholly consistent in holding that the States are sovereign, and in declaring that "the constitution in all its provisions looks to an indissoluble union composed of indestructible States, and that perpetuity and indissolubility of the Union by no means implies the loss of distinct and individual existence or the right of self-government by the States."

So sweeping have been the decisions of this high court and so steadfast has been its adherence to the great principles of the Constitution, that Senator Hoar, at the time of his lamented death the ablest member of the United States Senate, in an address before the Virginia State Bar Association, said:

"I have spoken in behalf of a tribunal whose constitutional judgments upon the greatest questions with which it has ever had to deal, have overthrown, baffled and brought to naught the policy, in regard to the great matter of reconstruction, of the party to which I myself belong, and the school of politics in which I have been trained and which, I suppose, was also that of a majority of the American people."

These decisions, while denying the right of a State to secede from the Union, and declaring it perpetual, also hold that the South was right in insisting that the States under the constitution, were sovereign and co-equal.

To conclude:

Mrs. Margaret Preston, in her poem, "Yes, Let the Tent Be Struck," written on the death of General Lee, beautifully expresses in one of the verses, what I have tried to say:

“We will not weep—we dare not. Such a story
As his grand life writes on the centuries’ years
Should crown our bosoms with a flush of glory,
That manhood’s type—supremest that appears—
Our South has shown the ages.”

My countrymen, “Virginia gave us this imperial man.” Born and reared, as we have seen, upon her soil, his body rests in her beautiful valley, her green sod covers and her eternal mountains sentinel his grave. What was mortal, we claim; but the genius, the soul, the immortal parts of this mighty man, these belong to no State nor section, but to our reunited country; to our common civilization and to God. The character and fame of Robert E. Lee are the priceless heritage of the Anglo-Saxon people.



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